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The Mohammadan Calendar

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Belonia et dux de Loronia²⁶ et multi alii barones quam equitum quam peditum bene decem milia et amplius ultra qui fuerunt obsisi²⁷ in illo bello. In anno xlvii sequenti fuit ipse rex Anglorum²⁸ ante castrum quod cognominatur²⁹ Callez et fuit ipse rex unum annum integrum coram illo dicto castro et post captum fuit ab ipso rege Anglorum presente rege F[r]ancorum cum maxima multitudine gentis sue.

THE MOHAMMADAN CALENDAR.

I.

ON perusing Professor Röhricht's recently published scholarly book on the history of the kingdom of Jerusalem I was sorry to find that, as regards chronology, it was greatly spoilt, partly by misprints, but chiefly owing to the author having placed apparently implicit faith in the correctness of Wüstenfeld's tables for reducing Turkish to Christian dates. He does not seem to be aware of the fact—pointed out long ago by Prince Cantemir, Dr. Ideler, Sir Harris Nicolas, and others—that the Turks and Arabs begin each month on the day on the eve of which the new moon was actually seen. If the moon cannot be seen on account of the sky being overcast, thirty days are reckoned in the month, no matter what any *rusnameh* (perpetual almanac), or the almanac issued by the imperial astronomer at Stambûl, or by any other authority, may state to the contrary. This arbitrary way of dealing with the number of days in the month can be best noticed in systematically kept diaries, such as, *e.g.*, the diaries of the campaigns of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, in which numerous instances can be found to prove my contention.¹ To regulate the beginning or the end of the fasting month, for instance, by the almanac, and not by the actual sight of the new moon, was always considered rank heresy, as is shown by the example of heretics mentioned in Albiruni's 'Chronology of Ancient Nations.'²

By the light of these facts many of the footnotes in Professor Röhricht's book read very oddly. Thus on p. 171 we are told that 'it is alleged by Kemal-ed-din that 19 June [A.D. 1124] or 4

²⁶ Raoul, duke of Lorraine. Cf. Adam Murimuth, *Continuatio Chronicarum*, Rolls Series, pp. 216, 248; also Robert of Avesbury, p. 369.

²⁷ Sic for *occisi*.

²⁸ MS. repeats *fuit*.

²⁹ MS. *quonominatur*.

¹ Thus, *e.g.*, in the diaries kept during his four Hungarian campaigns of A.H. 927, 932-33, 935-36, and 938-39 the number of the days in a month differs from the ideal chronology in not less than thirteen instances.

² The almanacs do not always agree with the ideal chronology either. Thus in the *rusnameh* for A.H. 1224, published and explained by Navoni in vol. iv. of Count Rzewusky's 'Fundgruben des Orients,' the number of the days of the months is correct in five cases and incorrect in seven cases—that is, according to the accepted ideal chronology on which all tables are based.

Djumada I. [A.H. 518] fell on a Wednesday. In reality it fell on a Thursday.' Or on p. 557 we find the following remark: 'Bahâ-ed-din [Bohadinus] 224 (Sunday, 29 Djumada [I. A.H. 587], i.e. 24 June [A.D. 1191], which fell on a Monday).' From the numerous quotations derived from the same eastern authors it is quite clear, without even a reference to the originals, that in the above instances the former author meant Wednesday, 18 June 1124, and the latter Sunday, 23 June 1191. Such obvious slips can be counted by the score in the book, and in many instances they cannot be rectified without a reference to the original sources.

To appreciate fully the confusion of dates arising from this cause, the reader has only to turn to the chapter narrating the doings of Richard Cœur-de-Lion in the Holy Land in A.D. 1192. The new moon was evidently visible in the evening of 29 Djumada I. A.H. 588, and consequently a new month was immediately begun, and the following day was reckoned 1 Djumada II. by the Moslems, though '30 days hath Djumada I.' in the almanac. It is further clear that 29 days also were counted on that occasion in Djumada II. in accordance with the almanac. Consequently there is a displacement in the dates of one day throughout the months of Djumada II. and Redjeb in that year. To make matters worse, for some reason or other Professor Röhrich arbitrarily turns the 7 Redjeb into 20 July, and accordingly is in this instance two days out in his reckoning.

Professor Röhrich is not the only offender in this respect. Dr. Wüstenfeld himself considers it a moot-point whether the Mohammadan era began with 15 or 16 July A.D. 622, though ample evidence can be adduced, *e.g.* from Albiruni, that though the actual date of the flight may not be precisely known, it was the intention of nearly all ancient chronologers to begin the era of the Hijrah with 15 July. Albiruni names the only author known to him who advocated 16 July, this having been a Friday, and consequently a Djuma, or the Day of Prayers, the Lord's Day, as it would be called in England. It is, however, wholly immaterial on which day the era commenced, as tables based on either date may easily be upset, as we see, by a single cloudy evening, and the date cannot be fixed to a day or two, unless the day of the week is mentioned. Wüstenfeld's or any other tables, therefore, such as those in 'L'Art de vérifier les Dates,' or Playfair's 'System of Chronology,' are only correct 'weather and moon permitting.'

LEWIS L. KROPF.

II.

Mr. Kropf has touched upon a subject which has given a good deal of trouble to students of oriental history. The well-known tables of Wüstenfeld represent an ideal chronology which was

certainly not always verified in practice. Even in the present day, with printed almanacs, there is often a discrepancy between the true date and the date actually used. For example, Mr. H. C. Kay tells me that an Egyptian Arabic newspaper was lately sent him dated 25 Sha'bân, which is stated on the paper to correspond with Tuesday, 18 Jan. 1898. This would make 1 Sha'bân correspond to 25 Dec. 1897; but the new moon really occurred on 23 Dec. at 7:35 A.M. (Greenwich time), and Sha'bân should have begun on the evening of that day. Thus even at the end of the nineteenth century, in a country where European education has long been at work, there is an error in the calculation of the month, due, no doubt, to failure of lunar observation. Even when the moon is promptly observed there may be a noticeable margin, as the day must be reckoned from the ensuing evening. On the other hand, in Persia, according to General Houtum Schindler, the almanac has more authority. He says that errors due to non-observation of the new moon only occur at 'out-of-the-way places, where almanacs are little known. The Persian astronomical almanac always gives the first day of the months correctly. . . . After the thirtieth comes the first, even with the most fanatical part of the population, whether the moon has been seen or not. Seeing the moon is only of importance at the beginning and end of the Ramazân.' (See his letter, and much more on the subject, in the introduction to R. S. Poole's 'Catalogue of Persian Coins.') If such inconsistencies and ambiguities exist in the present day, it may easily be imagined that they were not less confusing in the middle ages.

The common practice adopted, not by Professor Röhricht alone, but by almost all editors of Arabic chronicles, is to give the European date corresponding to the *month* date of the Arabic, and to ignore the *week* date. This is obviously wrong. The month is an uncertain date, liable to an error of a day or even several days in its commencement; but the week day is not open to the same error. Just as, in dealing with Latin chroniclers of the crusades, the naming of a saint's day gives a date which must be preferred to a month day if inconsistent, so in the Arabic chronicles I have found the week day a safe date. The proper course is to give the European date corresponding to the week day, except in a few isolated cases where there is an obvious error. When the week day is not stated there must always be made an allowance for possible error in the month.

I had occasion to examine the dates in Bahâ-ed-din lately, when preparing my biography of Saladin, and the results may interest Mr. Kropf. I took sixty-one cases in A.H. 583-587 in which the day of the week and the day of the month were both given in the Mohammadan reckoning, and I compared them with Wüstenfeld's corresponding dates. Of the sixty-one I found that thirty-three were

correct—that is, that the day of the week and month corresponded accurately to those given by calculation in Wüstenfeld's tables, where the week day is set against each month day. In twenty-two other cases the month day was one day behind: *e.g.* Friday, 23 Rabi I. 583, ought to have been the 24th, according to Wüstenfeld, showing that the new moon had been observed one day late, or at any rate that the month was reckoned a day late. This occurred consistently in batches of three or four dates in the same month, as might be expected. In two cases only was the day of the month one day 'fast,' or too early; four were two or three days out. Considering that the records were made in the camp during campaigns, and allowing for mistakes of copyists, the average accuracy of Bahâ-ed-din is, I think, remarkable. Nevertheless it is always a satisfaction to be able to confirm his month days by the much more trustworthy week days, which are not only free from error of calculation, or observation of the moon, but are also more likely to be accurately retained in the memory.

The error due to the Mohammadan day beginning on the evening before the European day given in Wüstenfeld seldom causes any trouble; but when we read of night marches or of cities assaulted after sundown, we must be on our guard.

STANLEY LANE-POOLE.

DECREES OF THE GENERAL CHAPTERS OF THE FRIARS MINOR,
1260 TO 1282.

IN an article entitled 'Die ältesten Redactionen der Generalconstitutionen des Franziskanerordens,' in the *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vol. vi., Father Ehrle, besides publishing the general constitutions as issued in the general chapters of Narbonne (1260) and Paris (1292), drew attention to the extreme rarity of any authentic records of the decrees of the general chapters of the Franciscan order in the thirteenth century, and printed from a variety of sources such notices and records as he could find. I am able to make a few additions to these records from a manuscript formerly in the Phillipps collection and now in my possession. This manuscript is a quarto volume numbered 'Phillipps MS. 207,' written on vellum, containing forty-six leaves, and dating from the end of the thirteenth century. It clearly belonged to some house in the province of France, but the name has been obliterated. The contents are:—

(1) ff. 1–36 a, 'Constitutiones generales Fratrum Minorum'—as issued in the chapter of 1292.

(2) ff. 36 b–43 b, 'Diffinitiones facte in capitulis generalibus.'